THE BLACK NAZARENE, QUIAPO, AND THE WEAK PHILIPPINE STATE

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Abstract
The dialectical relationship between the religious performances to the Black Nazarene and the informality of space in Quiapo has an implication in the “construction” of space and the formation of a weak Philippine state. The dynamics between poón, panata, and pananampalataya (elements in the discussion of the devotion to the Black Nazarene) and the barongbarong, looban, at hanapbuhay (elements in the discussion of the informality of Quiapo) helps in the construction of the spatiality of Quiapo. Quiapo is constructed as the place of the play between pananampalataya and hanapbuhay; the implication of this mutual dependency to the state is a familial logic. The change of identity to kapatid, regardless of social class, religion or status, among the mamamasan and devotees of the Black Nazarene and the identification of familiarity and proximity as kapitbahay among informal settlers creates, supports, and institutionalizes a ‘seeming’ absence of governance that makes possible a weak Philippine State.

Keywords
devotion, informal spaces, materiality, popular religiosity, urban places

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Media representations of the Black Nazarene devotion in Quiapo manifest opposing opinions and perspectives. On the one hand, Rina Jimenez-David refers to the devotion as a “Batya’t Palu-palo Spirituality” (washbasin and wooden club) – a ritual for the uneducated and the urban poor. It is not in accordance to norm. Recah Trinidad who claims to have joined the procession, describes it as a “to-each-his-own spirituality” that mirrors the image of a country that is confused... “either intoxicated with a pagan faith or a raw experience of holiness(?)”. Jim Libiran, an independent filmmaker, dismisses the devotion as a “pagan sacred orgy for a Christian idol.” These opinions draw from the many discourses that understand the devotion as “folk,” “popular,” and “unorthodox” and opposed to the “official,” “primal,” and orthodox Roman Catholic religiosity. From this perspective the former is delegated to the realm of the “marginal,” “irrational,” and “illegitimate” normally associated with issues of superstition, fanaticism, and superficiality. On the other hand, Nick Joaquin describes and explains this devotion as an approach to the “extravagant” manifested in terms of chanting or sobbing prayers out loud, walking on knees, dancing in church, carrying holy images in a howling procession, and flogging on Good Friday (“Nick Joaquin's Defense”). Jaime Bulatao, S.J. interprets the phenomenon as embodying “a prayer life bordering on the mystical” (62). Teresita Obusan summarizes it as a culturally-oriented mysticism in the marketplace (136). More than anything, these opposing opinions (sometimes abstracted, opposed, and disassociated) reflect the complexity of this religious phenomenon.

This paper aims to understand the dialectics and dynamics between devotion to the Black Nazarene and the “construction” of Quiapo; it further analyzes the phenomenon’s implication to the weak Philippine State. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the Black Nazarene devotion in terms of the traslacion and the play between poón and panata in the formation of pananampalataya. The second part looks into the kalye (streets) of Quiapo as the place and space of religious performance and livelihood; it is an attempt to initiate an ethnography of informality and religiosity by considering the dynamics of barongbarong and looban in the struggle for hanapbuhay. The third part brings together the performances to the Black Nazarene and the ethnography of informality to push forward the “construction” of space (Quiapo), and its implication to the Philippine State.

This is a philosophical reflection between religiosities and spaces, and their implication on the Philippine State. While drawing heavily from ethnographic research, the researcher is not a trained social scientist. The paper is coming from a participant perspective in the performance of devotion; needless to say, it is a product of almost two years of immersion, observation, and participation. Since the mamamasan and the taga-looban are highly mobile, quite unpredictable, and very unstable informants, there is a very limited exposure. So while some interviews
were made and recorded, they are used merely to corroborate, if not to triangulate, the data gathered from the participant-observation and document analysis.

**RELIGIOUS PRACTICES TO THE BLACK NAZARENE**

The peak of the devotion to the Black Nazarene in Quiapo happens every January 9, when millions of devotees go to Manila to join the *traslacion*—the most massive procession in the country. Contrary to popular understanding, January 9 is not the parochial feast day as Quiapo Church is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. What January 9 commemorates instead is the transfer (*traslacion*) of the Black Nazarene image in the mid-eighteenth century from the walled city, Intramuros, to one of the *pueblos*, Quiapo (Aguinaldo 22-23). While the *traslacion* is not the only expression of devotion to the Black Nazarene, it remains the most obvious; and just as there are many expressions of devotion, so are there many reasons for participating in the *traslacion* (cf. Aguinaldo 26-32; Obusan 65-67, 82-88).

Paul François Tremlett observes that the devotion is similar to a traditional male rites-of-passage and painful initiation (13-15). Rightly so, the *traslacion* and, more generally, the devotion to the Black Nazarene can be understood in terms of the Catholic understanding of pilgrimage using Victor and Edith Turner’s view following the basic framework of Andrew Van Gennep’s *rites de passage* (Ignacio 37-38). In this theory’s understanding of liminality, “pilgrims experience distance and release from mundane structures and institutions where they are placed with their assigned roles and statuses in society” (Ignacio 37). The “limen” is a temporary release and suspension of the threshold in and out of time. It is here that they receive “liberation,” undergoing a direct experience of the sacred, either in the material aspect of cure and healing or in the immaterial aspect of transformation of personality or conversion (see Turner and Turner). Timothy Radcliffe, OP explains this pilgrim itch as a natural expression of religious hunger. He writes:

Going on pilgrimage is rooted in our human nature. Pilgrimages can be expressive of deep conviction, but also give space for the unsure, those who travel hoping to find something on the way or at the end. (10)

Although likened to a pilgrimage, the *traslacion* is not an ordinary one. It is a “tough” pilgrimage and “tough” refers to the literal use of power and struggle. Jose Alain Austria describes it, for example, as “a very-risky ritual not for the faint-hearted, and an annual security nightmare” (“Hijos de Enero Nueve”) while Celia
Bonilla declares it as a hegemonic representation of Catholic ideology in Philippine society (119). While the *traslacion* may appear like a sheer pandemonium to others, this is not the case for those who share the devotion. These devotees find something in their devotion to the Black Nazarene. So while there are many Catholic pilgrim centers in the country, many still go to the Minor Basilica and the *traslacion* despite its roughness and toughness. In Quiapo, the Black Nazarene presents itself as proximal to the dense population of the metropolis’ urban and rural poor. And since mobility is not accessible to them, joining the *traslacion* and going to the Minor Basilica is one of the most feasible options. The devotion to the Black Nazarene remains to be an authentic expression of faith (*pananampalataya*). To begin this discussion about devotion to the Black Nazarene, let us look into the play between the *poón* and *panata* in the formation of *pananampalataya*.

The embodiment of the devotion to the Black Nazarene revolves around the *poón* (icon) of Jesus Christ with the title *Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno* (N.P.J.N.). The image is a 5’5” life-size statue of a barefooted Jesus carrying the cross on the way to Calvary, wearing a velvet maroon tunic embroidered with gold flowers and plant emblems with some lace trimmings on the collar and cuffs; on its waist is a gold-plated metal belt embossed with the word “Nazareno,” and a golden chain and ball is held in its left hand. And on its head are a crown of thorns and the traditional *Tres Potencias* halo. The color of the *poón* is dark, which is comparable “to the ancient images called, *lichas*, of the indigenous Filipinos, who deliberately blacken the wooden images of their *anito*, or ancestor spirit” (187).

Because the statue is a symbol of God Incarnate, this aged and revered wooden *poón* gives access to religious experience; in short, devotion and religious practices are constructed around this symbolic embodiment. Mircea Eliade calls this hierophany, which can be interpreted as “breakthroughs of the sacred (or the ‘supernatural’) into the World” (6). This means that the material becomes and is the means to encounter the sacred; the *poón* can “acquire their reality, their identity, only to the extent of their participation in a transcendent reality” (5). Thus, the *poón* of Jesus as a religious symbol (sacramental) embodies what goes beyond it (*hieros*: holy). And the *poón* cannot be excluded from the Christian understanding of icons and relics, or even from discussion on religious materiality.

The *poón* can never be understood autonomously and apart from the “intimacies” and religiosities people practice on and around it. The *poón* makes sense only in relation to items that are used to tangibly mediate sensory experiences between it and the believers, like the “*tuwalya* and *panyo*” [towel & handkerchief]. “For Westerners faith is a concept discussed in erudite language, for simple Catholics in the Philippines,” Francisco Claver, S.J. writes, “faith is a handkerchief” (109). This simplicity of the Filipinos does not, however, imply illiteracy as it does embodiment.
The body is central and the *tuwalya* and *panyo* play an important role in the mediation of the sacred. Just as *tuwalya* and *panyo* are very personal possessions often used for personal hygiene, so are they used to express deep emotions and affinity in faith expressions. The *tuwalya* and *panyo* – tactile technologies – demonstrate, more than anything, the nature of a very personal and material devotion that is publicly observed. These tactile technologies are not merely aesthetic materials, instead they facilitate religious experience. Thus, the *tuwalya* and *panyo* cannot be understood separately from what Michel Foucault calls the arts of existence – “those intentional and voluntary actions by which men [and women] not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria” (10-11).

In the performance of the *traslacion*, there is a need to use one’s *tuwalya* and *panyo* to manifest one’s intimacy with the sacred, to present the authenticity of one’s arts of existence. While the devotees and *mamamasans’* desire are symbolically manifested by mediating mechanisms, the desire for proximity can also be understood in terms of the devotees’ practice of *pagyayapak* (barefootedness). While most processions in the country necessitate the use of footwear, the *traslacion* is characterized by barefoot devotees at the heart of urbanity. This is a theological expression of devotion in “he who emptied himself and took the form of a slave” (*New Revised Standard Version*, Philippians 2: 6-11); but this is also a physical expression of the devotees’ desire to be one with (empathy) and be like (imitation) Jesus. Mang Rudy, a mamamasan and taho vendor, explains, “[N]agyayapak ako bilang pakikiisa sa pagyayapak ni Kristo.” In a way, it is being with (pagdamay) Christ, and having a shared interiority with Him. But *pagyayapak* is just one expression of devotion; there are more like *pabihis* (changing the garments of the Black Nazarene), *pabendisyon* (kissing the hands of priests), *pahawak* (touching of the statue or the garment of the Black Nazarene), *pagpasan* (carrying of the wood of the *andas* or the rope attached to it), or *paglalakad ng paluhod* (processing to the altar on bended knees). These different practices revolve around the *poón*, but also around the body.

Since these practices are embodied, they are enduring and stable. Pierre Bourdieu refers to this as *habitus* (170, 471). In fact, it is in their stability and durability that devotees and *mamamasan* feel a sense of order and security rooted in their capacity to perform religious practices and devotion. This does not, however, connote stasis; instead, it opens up the capacity for inventiveness, authenticity, and creativity. So while a new devotee can participate in the procession, it is the *mamamasan* and *hijos* who govern the *traslacion* (Austria). This explains why devotees and *mamamasan* flock to Quiapo every January 9 to repeat the same rituals, the same processional route, the same meeting places, the same hymns and gestures, among
others. Yet the value of these repetitions cannot be underestimated and we can see that in the succeeding parts.

The poón in the Catholic tradition is understood as Biblia Pauperum—the bible of the poor. But, with the Incarnation, it is also interpreted as embodiment. Richard McBrien concludes his introduction to Catholic theology and practice by identifying three key foci of the Catholic tradition:

No theological principle or focus is more characteristic of Catholicism or more central to its identity than the principle of sacramentality. The Catholic vision sees God in and through all things: other people, communities, movements, events, places, objects, the world at large, the whole cosmos. The visible, the tangible, the finite, the historical—all these are actual or potential carriers of the divine presence. Indeed, it is only in and through these material realities that we can encounter the invisible God.

A corollary of the principle of sacramentality is the principle of mediation. A sacrament not only signifies; it also causes what it signifies. Thus, created realities not only contain, reflect, or embody the presence of God. They make that presence effective for those who avail themselves of these realities. Just as we noted in the previous section that the world is mediated by meaning, so the universe of grace is a mediated reality: mediated principally by Christ, and secondarily by the Church and by other signs and instruments of salvation outside and beyond the Church....

Finally, Catholicism affirms the principle of communion: that our way to God and God’s way to us is not only a mediated way, but a communal way. And even when the divine-human encounter is most personal and individual, it is still communal in that the encounter is made possible by the mediation of the community. (1180-1181)

Sacramentality, mediation, and communion are embodied and material realities. The body and the poón are the only ways to God. This understanding counters the intellectualist Western tradition which privileges the inner mental state, the esoteric experience, the internal consciousness in favor of the material, or sacramental. If God is to be made present, it can only be through the body, via the material. As Fr. Daniel Franklin Pilario, C.M. writes, “For ordinary people, these everyday practices which are deeply intertwined with one’s cultural memories and religious history are the only wells from which they can draw the strength needed in their daily struggle for survival.”

The devotees refer to themselves as mamamasan or hijos. This is closely associated to the practices and tasks they perform in relation to the poón. The name mamamasan reflects not just the very act of carrying the andas, but their affinity and identification with the image of Jesus carrying (in Filipino, pinapasan) the cross. The affinity, according to one informant, is not with a “falling” and/or “stumbling” Christ, but with a Christ who is “standing” after a fall. That means...
that the mamamasan recognizes not only his poverty, but also the possibility of change. One of the priests in Quiapo, Venusto Suarez, speaks of a replica that was commissioned by the basilica to a carver in Paete, Laguna, who portrayed a “suffering” Christ as made visible in the image’s face. The devotees and the mamamasan refused this image, and the basilica had no option but to decommission it. This is because they find affinity with a Jesus that is overcoming suffering more than a suffering servant (Ignacio).

The poón is dialectically related to panata (vow, commitment, or promise), which is an embodied mode of ritual intimacy. A panata refers to one’s private and personal relationship with the poón and fellow devotees and mamamasan cultivated through participation in the traslacion, motivated and sustained by self-cultivation and differing forms of agentive power. The panata is as much internal as it is external; there is a different level of physicality at play with it. Grace Odal describes her experience as:


While it is difficult to understand panata from an outsider’s point of view, it is not impossible to understand it. If we listen to devotees and mamamasan, we get an inkling that panata is a response to the faithfulness, love, and special grace that the poón has given to them. There is a sense of specificity and privacy at work here that necessitates the promise to renew their commitment annually by attending and participating in the traslacion. The panata is an interior movement performed publicly—a commitment of the heart shared with others. Cecilia De la Paz, in her research on poón explains the dialectics between panata this way:

A panata may be characterized as a private vow that is inherently secret, known only by the person making it. The potency of the vow—the performance of the actions involved, its purpose, and the duration of its performance—depends on the believer. A panata loses potency or power if it is revealed to anyone; the state of secrecy is of prime importance.... However, a panata is publicly performed, so that all members of one’s town actually know, because they observe, that one is undergoing such a process. While the content of one’s vow is private, the realization can only be achieved in the public sphere, in spaces outside the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of institutional church authority, so that rituals and myths concerning a poón can potentially transform secular spaces such as home interiors and street spaces into sacred spaces. (186)
Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI warns the Catholic faithful that these types of engagement and commitment “[tend] towards the irrational, and can at times be somewhat superficial. Yet it would be quite wrong to dismiss it... it gives flesh to faith...” (“Letter to the Seminarians”). A look at some of the dynamics of the traslacion can shed light on panata at work in this devotion. During the traslacion, for example, the mamamasans and the devotees feel each other, listen to one another, and adjust even the way of pulling the rope that is attached to the andas of the poón. The dynamics demonstrate that “[w]hen [religious] objects move, people's emotions and sensibilities are likewise placed in motion, forming the basis for specific kinds of social relationships” (Bautista vii). This is a kind of sociality created by the construction and replication of the historic traslacion. Those who join the traslacion participate in the transformation of the self, and thus receive a new identity. Once you participate in the traslacion, your companions name you as kapatid (sibling), that can be interpreted as siblings or as one you share something with (ka-patid). The experience of being with thousands of mamamasans and devotees, who are mostly men and urban poor, in a limited urban space creates a set of oral and visceral landscape that anybody who wishes to touch the poón needs to live with and perhaps share with; this is the communal part of the panata. While devotees know that the “Panginoong Hesus Nazareno” is the only true Son of God, by walking with him, an informant said, they become adopted as children of the Father and thus are “magkakapatid” (siblings to one another) regardless of social class or status. Aids to the panata are the traditional liturgy, mainstream sacramental colors, mood, movements, and rhythmic celebrations that revolve around the poón. These too create a sensorium that constitutes religious experience.

Another manifestation of the panata is not only the desire to touch and be touched by God, but also to take care of others. When an hijo commands indayog, for example, during the procession, he refers to a unison of dance-like and cadence movement that accompanies the salya (forward push) to prevent devotees from harming one another because of the large number. So that in the event of a loosened rope attached to the andas, which poses a grave danger to everyone, an hijo shouts otso! This is a signal to stop. Once it is heard, devotees are quick to raise the rope above their heads to avoid struggling, and eventually harming or killing, a devotee or mamamasan. Pagsuko is also another interesting practice, which literally means surrender. A mamamasan or devotee signals this by raising his right hand if the procession has already overwhelmed him. In this case, one of the namiminga (a mamamasan who is near the wood called pinga or support of the andas) plucks him out of the multitudes for him to be carried like a crowd surfer directly towards the first aid station nearby. According to one of my informants, pagsuko is symbolic of the popular and transcendent wisdom that accompanies this devotion; not all participants get to touch the poón and not everyone gets to finish the traslacion. That too is biyaya (grace).
What emerges in the dynamics of poón and panata is pananampalataya (loosely translated as faith). For the devotees and mamamasan, pananampalataya is an experience of sensuality coupled with risk. It is from root words pananam (a taste of) and palataya (gambling); it literally means a taste of gambling. When one looks into the devotion to the Black Nazarene, one immediately notices its materiality and plurality. The poón and its sensuality allows us to understand “the conditions that shape the feelings, senses, spaces, and performances of belief, that is, the material coordinates or forms of religious practice” (Morgan 2-3). But it is inevitable to also see how panata flows into communal practice. Hent de Vries explains this “from below” approach, which somehow gives context to the singularity and particularity of the ordinariness of the panata:

Words, things, gestures, and powers—like sounds, silences, smells, touches, shapes, colors, affects, and effects—might be seen as instances and instantiations of the “everyday,” of the “extraordinariness of the ordinary,” of the “ordinariness of the extraordinary,” of the “common,” the “low,” ... They are the visible and tangible, the living and enabling conditions of “the religious,” just as they typify its supposed counterpart, “the secular,” including all the varieties of modern experience in between. (66)

Pananampalataya, more than a fixed code of creeds and ceremonies, refers to a sphere of possibilities pushing forward the dynamics of poón and panata towards a more authentic experience of the sacred in one’s everyday life. But the constitution of everyday and authentic life happens in a space that is constituted by the habitus. This leads us to the second part of the paper: the construction of space.

DYNAMICS OF SPACE IN QUIAPO

The devotion to the Black Nazarene lays in the capital of the Philippines—Metro Manila; the specific place and space of the devotion is in the heart of the metropolis—Quiapo. Quiapo is a contested district concealed by commercial buildings and stores, universities and colleges, dormitories and apartments, residential homes, and other small and big establishments. Its old residents are from the native aristocracy of the country such as the Legardas, Aranetas, Genatos, Paternos, and Nakpils. In fact, two presidents (Manuel Roxas and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) trace their lineage to Quiapo. While its historicity can be seen in the remaining heritage houses along R. Hidalgo Street, these traces are neglected and ignored. The two-story houses called bahay-na-bato (stone house), where old families lived have now been turned into dormitories, residences, eateries, and sari-sari stores. The streets of Quiapo are crowded with motocycles, jeepneys, and kariton (makeshift living spaces and mobile stores). The street plays an important role in
the life of the district; it is the center of social interaction and affairs. The street is where people meet and tell stories, conduct business to earn a living, and pray and worship together. As already stated, life in Quiapo is defined by the *kalye*; it is the source of the community’s knowledge and new ideas. One informant declares that the difference between what is normative and what is not is defined by what is *kalye*-bound and communally governed. In the same way, the *kalye* plays an important role in the constitution of authentic everyday lives.

Emphasis on the *kalye* and its dynamics is a clear mark of the growing informality in Quiapo. In the book *Lungsod Iskwater*, the *kalye* and the *barangbarang* are correlates of one another, which create places and spaces understood as informal settlements (Alcazaren 78). Thus, these settlements, although informal, provide a different type of fluidity and spontaneity to Quiapo’s urbanity. As Paulo Alcazaren writes:

> Informal settlements along creeks, utility rights-of-way, and along the rails are linear in nature. These long spaces become the settlement’s main street, a series of public plazas, markets, playgrounds, and extensions of living rooms for the residents. The nature of the space is non-linear and is set by the function, the users, days of the week, and the time of day. (80)

What is clear is how old and formal places are dynamically turned into new and informal spaces in Quiapo. This can be attributed to different demographic and spatial factors. Noticeably, the people interviewed for this paper are mostly rural residents who migrated to the city. They are minimally educated and unskilled *provincianos* (from the province) in search of greener pastures and a better life in Manila; they are, further, extended families and relatives living together, but they also welcome friends, townsfolk, and foster siblings. Topographically, Quiapo is uneven and continues to be so as intra-urban movement of students, devotees, investors and business people, and buyers lends to Quiapo’s greater informality.

Quiapo is constituted by the cosmopolitan experiences of these people’s past and present lifestyles, which are invariably and undeniably linked. Students, migrants, believers, and business people bring their culture and tradition, social structures, and space organization, turning Quiapo into a center of informality. The *barangbarang* manifests the desire to replicate these rural spaces. While there is a desire to replicate rural settlements and ways of constructing and building, “what could not be replicated...was actual space, since there were thousands of neighbors where there used to be only a few relations surrounding one’s names” (Ferrer 132). It seems that the more plural and multiverse the residents, the more cosmopolitan and informal their way of life. The *barangbarang* is a gradual and evolving process.
of building and dwelling; it never comes to an end. People are learning to use semiconcrete materials as well as makeshift ones. What is observable in Quiapo are patterns and permutations of informality brought about by the subtle but increasing “little-by-little” (pakonti-konti o patagpi-tagpi) and small-scale development. In this notion of development, there are two different notions of spaces. On the one hand, public spaces are understood as “negative residual spaces created after the incremental growth” (145). While the spaces between houses, on the other hand, are narrow and natural nodes used for multi-functional social gatherings. The latter kind of spaces are communal ones used for tambayan, inuman, or others; they are value-laden “by virtue of [their] being a natural gathering point or of the character and roles of the people who live beside the space (barangay tanod or kapitan)” (145). In this sense, the callejons are equally and communally a part of the kalye as is the barangbarang. The separation and distinction between the private and public domain are also blurred in Quiapo for within these informal communities the public and private domains are understood as informal transition spaces. While more symbolic than physical, Quiapo manifests a degree of permeability of spaces between the kalye and informal settlements (146). Despite seeming to be disorderly and chaotic, the resulting fabric of informal settlements “is invariably fine-grained with small, incremental decisions and choices translated into small patterns and building blocks that eventually evolve into a unified, coherent, and meaningful whole” (145; cf. 146-147).

Quiapo is governed by the logic of the looban; it is not religion that lays this down. That is why Quiapo is not only a center for Catholic devotion. It is not only a home to the Black Nazarene and for Roman Catholics, but to other religions and belief systems as well. The Golden Mosque was, for example, constructed in 1976 as a welcome gift to the Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi; this is the city’s largest mosque and serves the growing Muslim community. Further north of Quiapo is the Seng Guan Buddhist Temple, the center of Manila’s Buddhist community. It is also the center of the country’s alternative medicine, fortune-telling, and magic (De Mesa 125-147). In this sense, the logic of the looban is able to accommodate, if not transcend, a religiously and spiritually plural state-of-affairs. The looban reflects how marginalized and informal communities are multifaceted and plural environments; it shows the relationship among groups, social practices, and peoples (Ferrer 191).

The looban is a unique and endemic environment. These are dwelling spaces concentrated along the kalye and callejons that branch out to different directions. The estero is the communal sewage system. In the looban, their material possessions are not many and are often different in kind, form, and type depending on individual preferences and familial resources. Although spatial, the looban also serves as the locus for identity formation. In giving a sense of identity, the looban provides a
distinction between those who find associations with others because they share a purok, and those who have more intimate encounters because they are kapitbahay (Jocano 20). The dynamics between purok and kapitbahay are important. On the one hand, purok represents a more generic way of life shared by those from the looban. On the other hand, kapitbahay is a more cohesive relationship organized around the intimate setting of aggregate dwellings. In the words of Jocano, “[f]amiliarity defines the boundaries of kapitbahay, with contiguity of domiciles as the fundamental point of reference” (20). The distinction between pook and kapitbahay establishes a standard of behavior governing the conduct of everyday affairs. In this sense, the barangbarang establishes a unique, endemic, and specific kind of social intimacy in the looban; it further formalizes a localized pattern adapted to the kalye and at the same time an attachment unique to Quiapo.

With this apparent permeability and fluidity in the looban, Quiapo remains an important commercial and business district. While the sari-sari store is “the quintessential face of Filipino urbanity,” (Alcazaren 107) the market stalls of Quiapo remain to challenge its mega equivalent shopping malls and restaurants that are also prevalent there. It is inevitable to think that the rise of informal settlements is driven simply by economics (Icamina 150). The stalls of Carriedo Street sell, for example, clothes, hardware, mobile phones, and DVDs, while the Quinta market showcases vendors peddling fish, meat, vegetables, fruits, and other food shops. This arrangement “proves that residents prefer to live in communities because they were near sources of income”(155). Or better yet, Quiapo is a source of the dweller’s hanapbuhay (livelihood). Quite visible around the Quiapo Church are apothecary stalls selling all types of herbal and folk medicines, as well as amulets, images, and religious icons (De Mesa 125-147). Further north of the Basilica are the Central Market that sells military and school uniforms, merchandizes, machines and hardware (Bloom et al. 107-108). In Binondo, the Divisoria Market sprawls with ancient and murky food stalls. A branch of The Shoe Mart(SM) Mall, the country’s largest mall chain, can also be found in Quiapo. Students also populate this place, which is part of the university belt. This explains further the fast transition and growing number of informality among its pilgrim residents and inhabitants.

While the existence of informal settlements in Quiapo seems to be a nuisance to order, it is also beneficial to the urban economy that is in need of a large pool of workers and affordable, albeit lower-quality, goods and services (Icamina 155). The dwellers create a niche in the market, such that it is inevitable to see the interplay at work between the malls and department stores, the motor vehicles on roads, the sari-sari stores and pushcart economies, and the bicycle/tricycle in the alleys. In summary, this part of the paper discussed the informality of the barangbarang and the looban, and how the dynamics of these two are intertwined in one’s search for livelihood (hanapbuhay). This means that the kalye of the traslacion is also at the
same time the space for religious encounter (pananampalataya) and the source of livelihood (hanapbuhay). These two realities merge and interact with each other in Quiapo. What this means further for Quiapo and what is its implication to the Philippine State is the last concern of this paper.

FROM QUIAPO TO THE PHILIPPINE STATE

So far, the first part of the paper presents “not simply what people think about their images but what images or objects or spaces themselves do, how they engage believers, what powers they possess, and in what manner a community comes to rely on them for the vitality and stability of belief” (Goa, Morgan, and Paine 8) vice versa. The second part discusses the dominant feature of informality in Quiapo, and how “[a]ctivities generate and lead to specific forms of physical spaces and activity settings” (Ferrer 146). The traslacion seems to mirror the dominant pattern of informality in the looban and the looban seems to pick up from the plurality of religious expressions in the traslacion; this dialectic constitutes the play of informality and plurality in the performance of the traslacion in the kalye of Quiapo. Thus, there is a strong and observable correlation between the plurality of the Black Nazarene’s traslacion and the informality of the dwellers in Quiapo. The Black Nazarene moves, on the one hand, around Quiapo, thereby revising, reformulating, and reconstituting urban, authentic, and everyday life and “recognizing the impetus people ascribe to tactile sensory perceptions—touching, wiping, and kissing the poón” (De La Paz 196). This means that religious practices are constituted by the space, which facilitates it, and the space conditions the religious performance.

To better understand the dynamics and play of informality between religious performance and the city of Manila, it is interesting to see the implications of these plural manifestations of faith and the informality of space in the wider context of the Philippine State. Since the city is the nation writ large, the clear implication of the aforementioned informality and plurality seems to be a weak state. This is evident in the “seeming” absence of the rule of law within civic life especially in the plural expressions of faith and in the informality of space. While “relative autonomy” and benevolent tolerance make the State tolerant of plurality and informality, the absence of control in the performance of ritual and in the utilization of space manifests an undeniable weakness in the State. Despite this being so, it is in these growing plurality and informality that the State confronts competing social forces, giving it the option to pursue common good, public interest, and the rule of law.

While the State cannot ignore internal and external pressures, it needs to balance the forces that influence it. Two examples come to mind. The first is the case of the...
bomb threat during the *traslacion* of 2012 where President Benigno Simeon Aquino III on national television warned and discouraged the devotees and *mamamasans* to participate in the procession; this warning and discouragement was literally ignored by millions of devotees, who participated in the *traslacion* and created the record for the longest *traslacion* so far with twenty-two-hours. As a response to this defiance, the government requested mobile networks to suspend their service in the area and deny those with bad intentions to communicate with accomplices or to trigger the aforementioned bomb. The second example happened last year when the traditional route of the procession was challenged by the government upon inspection of the integrity of the MacArthur Bridge noting that it has minor cracks and is subject for retrofitting; Manila Vice Mayor Isko Moreno said Jones Bridge would be safer for devotees since it was recently retrofitted. While Msgr. Jose Clemente Ignacio agreed during the *traslacion*, the Vice Mayor and other government officials still needed to negotiate with the devotees who tried to force the procession into MacArthur Bridge despite the approved rerouting to Jones Bridge.

On the one hand, this seeming lack of control implies a possible weak State. In this sense, the weak State is an enlarged consequence of the plurality of religious expressions within and without the Catholic faith, the informality and construction of space in Quiapo, and the different and plural body politic. Fr. Jose Mario Francisco, S.J. explains that:

> ... the relation between the body Catholic and the body politic may call for imaginaries similarly radical. Just as the formation of religious community and nation involved time-space considerations, these new configurations undoubtedly would shape the nature of religious community and the nation, and thus challenge the Catholic Church to rethink the imaginary of the Philippines as “Catholic nation.” (369)

While Catholic church and the State embody a long history in the experience and process of democracy, Fr. Francisco thinks that one does not simply imply the other. It is undeniable that the dynamics between Catholicism and democracy imply the weakness of the State to plan and implement policies independent of private and religious interests. In the Philippines, the state is determined based on the distribution of social control between the dynamics of nation building and the plural and informal institutions. These dynamics determine the country’s capability to “penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways” (Migdal 4).

On the other hand, weak States can also be constructed by political patronage. On this microscopic level, the relationship between politicians and their supporters determine policy and bureaucratic reform. The same dynamics can be discerned
in relation to Filipino political families.” Paul D. Hutchcroft and Joel Rocamora observe that despite differences in Philippine political leadership throughout the years, “the logic of patronage remains central to understanding Philippine politics, and political parties remain weak, ill-defined, and poorly institutionalized” (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 281). This means that political patronage operates on a level that is personally and communally beneficial, and not on the level of political principles and convictions. Patronage is personal, and never national.

In his book, *Strong Family, Weak State*, Lukas Kaelin expands the notion of family relations to what he calls family logic (101). By “family logic,” Kaelin refers to established familiarity through a determination of common grounds in the face of anonymity. In this sense, the renewed identity of the devotees and *mamamasan* (*kapatid*), and the *kapitbahay* between and among informal dwellers which serve as the sufficient ground for familiarity make possible this familial logic. In this sense, informality facilitates the transformation, while the *traslacion*, despite its plurality, constitutes it. Niels Mulder explains how this familial logic can appear contrary to the State: “The highly personalized world of action is an impediment to the development of a wider, institutional sphere based on abstractions such as “the rule of law” and “the common good” (42). But is it this simple? No. The informality of space and the plurality of religious expressions hold the Philippines and its nation-identity in the process of reflexivity. This ever-expanding network of personalized relationships “leads to ruptures and distortions once strictly neutral measures of distributive justice and equal treatment are applied” (Kaelin 154).

**CONCLUSION**

On the one hand, the *traslacion* operates within the materiality of the *poón* and the expression of *panata*; the dialectics between the two constitutes *pananampalataya*. On the other hand, the *kalye* serves as locus of everyday life for the slums of Quiapo, which is the place of the *barangbarang* and space of the *looban*. The play between these elements brings together the informality of the slums and the challenge to *hanapbuhay*. Quiapo is the site where the plurality of *pananampalataya* and the informality of *hanapbuhay* coincide. But what happens in Quiapo is not a mere toleration of one and the other; it is a reinforcement of each other. Neither is this limited only to Quiapo. As it is, the plurality of religious observance and the informality of slum dwelling necessarily point to a “seeming” weak Philippine State. In this sense, weakness is not understood as something negative. Instead, it is an affirmation of the familial logic at work in our religious observances in the form of the *kapatid* and in the constitution of our everyday lives in the face of the *kapitbahay*. The Philippines is different and Quiapo remains as
the “heart of the city and the crossroad of the nation.” Nick Joaquin asserts, “On this plaza, as in New York’s Times Square, an entire nation converges every moment, spilling out of taxis, buses, jeepneys and calesas” (“The Day of Downtown” 67). In this sense, all roads lead to Quiapo, and, thus, from Quiapo to the world.
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Notes

1. See also Jose Alain Austria, “Hijos de Enero Nueve: The Black Nazarene Procession as a Male Rite of Passage.”


3. See Jayeel Cornelio, “Popular Religion and the Turn to Everyday Authenticity: Reflections on the Contemporary Study of Philippine Catholicism.”


6. Belief is not simply a matter of doctrinal, theological, or scriptural transmission, privatized and internalized in the name of securing religious harmony amid diversity. It is crafted, rather, from a topography of underlying assumptions, which are conditioned by tangible things that are “out there” in the public sphere” (Bautista, “Introduction” 7).

7. See also Pierre Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice.

8. The Philippine Government is patterned after the American constitution except for the implementation of the Barangay system, which is lead by the Kapitan (barangay captain) and his tanods.


Works Cited


